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To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes

Subject: Hanoi to Try Chinese Nationalist "Spy Commandos" Captured Last Year

Trial Announcement. On June 3, Hanoi announced that 17 "US-Chiang Kai-shek spy commandos," including their leader, will be put on trial shortly. The men were reportedly captured, and nine more killed, as they landed on the coast of the northern province, Quang Ninh, on July 29 last year. The incident and the capture of another group on October 23 originally were reported on November 1, but there was no further exploitation. In the accounts, the United States was not directly implicated -- South Vietnamese authorities allegedly gave the group its orders on an island off South Vietnam -- but the mission was said to be part of a United States plot to launch attacks against both North Vietnam and Communist China.

Probable Exploitation. There was no explanation for the delayed trial. However, it is likely that Hanoi sought a propitious time and chose the present when there is open discussion of carrying the war to North Vietnam and of possibly using Chinese Nationalist forces in the South. Thus, the announcement declared that the trial would deal a "powerful blow" at the scheme, allegedly arranged by the GVN Defense Minister in Taipei, to introduce Chinese Nationalist forces into the South

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for use in raids against the North. The trial certainly will receive extensive publicity and will focus on alleged United States plots to extend the war to the North and to Communist China. Hanoi probably hopes the trial will counter United States arguments that its objectives are limited and will raise international fears that the China issue will become an important factor in the South Vietnamese conflict. In this way, Hanoi will seek to complicate efforts by the United States to solicit foreign support and assistance for its effort in South Vietnam.

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